

November 26, 2012

The Honorable Jane Lubchenco
Administrator
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Herbert C. Hoover Building, Room 6811
14th Street & Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Dr. Lubchenco:

I am pleased to transmit to you the following report from the Ocean Exploration and Research (OER) Program review. This review was conducted under the Science Advisory Board Ocean Exploration Advisory Working Group (OEAWG) as per its terms of reference. The review panel found that the OER Program has had impressive successes in science, mapping, data management, education, politics, and diplomacy. However, there remain vast unexplored regions of the ocean. The panel's major finding is there is undiminished motivation for ocean exploration research. The panel affirmed that ocean exploration is distinct from comprehensive surveys and at-sea research, including hypothesis-driven investigations aimed at the ocean bottom, artifacts, water column, and marine life.

The review panel felt that the OER program is critical to ocean research. Its multidisciplinary approaches equip explorers with the very best in marine research technology. However, the work of the OER program is unfinished. Based on the panel's findings ten recommendations were made: 1) Setting strategic goals and priorities, 2) Gaining NOAA leadership support, 3) Running a national forum on ocean exploration, 4) Establishing radical new management models, 5) Restoring the extramural targeted expedition program, 6) Diverting all *Okeanos Explorer* funds for targeted exploration charters, 7) Developing partnerships to stay abreast of new technologies, 8) Accelerating work on the Extended Continental Shelf (ECS) mapping, 9) Developing icons and cultivating champions, and 10) Establishing an Ocean Exploration Advisory Board.

The OER Program is critical to conducting quality ocean research. The panel found this review very successful and commends NOAA on embarking on innovative ocean exploration. The SAB felt this was a very useful report and a great example of why NOAA leadership should continue to support the effort of the OER Program.

If you have any questions, comments or concerns, please let me know.

Sincerely,



Raymond J. Ban

Chair, NOAA Science Advisory Board
Managing Director, Ban & Associates, LLC.

Attachment

cc: Jerry Schubel
Larry Mayer
Bob Ballard
Jesse Ausubel
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Tim Arcano
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